

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #180, October 25 – November 16
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



LUCY VALKURY



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THE BOOKS
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NAZIS GET
THE BOOT
P14

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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 13 times a year on Mondays for our print and online readership of more than 100,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 700 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and with *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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community calendar

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS AT INDY-
EVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

SUN OCT 28

4pm • Free

PANEL: FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
VICTIMIZED BY POLICE BRUTALITY &
TERRORISM. Family members who have lost
loved ones to police brutality will tell stories
of their struggles for justice and strategize
on taking action within our communities and
hold police accountable. Performance by
Rebel Diaz to follow. Hosted by Campaign to
End the New Jim Crow.
Riverside Church, Assembly Hall
120th St & Claremont Ave
212-870-6700 • endnewjimcrow.org

MON OCT 29

TIME TBA • Free

EVENT: VACANT PROPERTY TOUR. On the
83rd anniversary of the stock market crash,
join Picture the Homeless for a tour of the
city's vacant properties — and learn how
they can be used to provide affordable hous-
ing to the city's lowest income residents. For
details on meet-up time and location, email
adrian@picturethehomeless.org.
646-314-6423 • picturethehomeless.org

MON OCT 29

7pm • \$10-\$15

TALK: BLUEPRINT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY
— MEDEA BENJAMIN ON DRONE WAR-
FARE. Join CODEPINK co-founder Medea
Benjamin for an in-depth conversation about
her latest book, *Drone Warfare: Killing by
Remote Control*. Book signing to follow.
Culture Project
45 Bleecker St
212-925-1806 • info@cultureproject.org

THU NOV 1

7pm • \$25-\$35

CONCERT: TESTIFY! Come out and support
the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) at this
benefit concert. Performers include The
Persuasions, Umi, Dead Prez and Emma's
Revolution. Joining these acts will be
testimony from prominent artists and social
justice advocates highlighting the NLG-
NYC's work.
Riverside Church
120th St & Claremont Ave
212-679-6018 • nlgnyc.org

SAT NOV 3

1pm • \$20

CLASS: *INDYDEPENDENT* REPORTING WORK-
SHOP. Learn how to report and write articles
for *The Indypendent* and other radical media
outlets. Email ehenderson@indypendent.org
for an application. Deadline Oct. 31. Space

is limited.

The Indypendent

666 Broadway, Suite 510

212-904-1282 • indypendent.org/workshops

SAT NOV 10

10:30am • \$10

EVENT: NEW YORK CITY MARXISM CON-
FERENCE: A WORLD IN CRISIS, A WORLD
IN STRUGGLE. Millions of people have come
to the understanding that capitalism isn't
working. Marxism provides a revolution-
ary understanding and strategy for ridding
society of exploitation and oppression once
and for all. Come to a day-long conference to
discuss the history and politics that can help
guide our fight for a different world. No one
turned away due to lack of funds.
Columbia University, Lerner Hall
2920 Broadway
nyciso@gmail.com • nycsocialist.org

SAT NOV 10

1pm • \$20

CONFERENCE: THE TREE OF LIFE. Join
Jewish and Palestinian peace-makers as
they discuss the Israel/Palestine conflict and
what you can do about it. Speakers include
Eran Efrati of Breaking the Silence and Israeli
academic Neve Gordon. The conference will
be followed by a reception, then a concert at
7 p.m. Sponsored by Brooklyn for Peace. To
register, visit nyc.tolef.org/register.
St. Michael's Church
225 W 99th St
718-624-5921 • is.pales@brooklynpeace.org

SUN NOV 11

11am • Free

DISCUSSION: BEATING THE POST-
ELECTION BLUES. Join the Ethical Action
Committee and a special guest for a post-
election discussion about the outcome of the
presidential election and what to do next.
Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture
53 Prospect Park West
718-768-2972

WED NOV 14

2pm • Free

EVENT: NEW OFFICE OPENING. Join the
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in celebrating
the opening of their new office. Speakers
include Gregor Gysi, head of the Left Party
in the German Bundestag; and acclaimed
Broadway actress Kathleen Chalfant, who
will be presenting an interpretation of Rosa
Luxemburg's letters; and Rosa Luxemburg
Foundation directors from four continents,
who will discuss the state of the international
left. Reception to follow.
The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
275 Madison Ave, Suite 2114

OCT—NOV

UPCOMING EVENTS

MON, OCT 22 • 7:30pm

PANEL: THE UPRISING IN SYRIA.

The uprising against the regime of Bashar Assad in Syria has polarized the U.S. left. In the context of this polarization, Bassam Haddad and Maya Mikdashi — both contributors to *Jadaliyya.com*, an independent ezine produced by ASI (Arab Studies Institute) — will review some of the basic realities and contours of the Syrian case. Chaired by Sinan Antoon, co-founder and co-editor of *Jadaliyya's* cultural page. Co-sponsored by *Jadaliyya.com*.
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

SAT, OCT 27 • 1:30pm

BOOK PARTY/FORUM: REVOLUTION AT POINT ZERO: HOUSEWORK, REPRODUCTION AND FEMINIST STRUGGLE.

Join author Silvia Federici for a discussion of her new book, which offers a brief history of the international feminist movement and a contemporary critique of capitalism.
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

TUE, OCT 30 • 7:30pm

BOOK PARTY/FORUM: HOWARD ZINN: A LIFE ON THE LEFT.

Join author Martin Duberman for a discussion of his biography of Howard Zinn — a bestselling author, a political activist, a lecturer, and one of America's most recognizable and admired progressive voices. Co-sponsored by the New Press.
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

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917-409-1040 • info@rosalux-nyc.org

SAT NOV 17

12pm • Sliding scale

CLASS: KID REPORTERS WRITING AND
REPORTING WORKSHOP. *IndyKids* newspa-
per is offering a workshop to kids ages 9-13.
Kids work alongside professional journalists
to research, write and edit articles about cur-
rent events and social justice. Two additional
workshops will be held at the same time on
Nov. 21 and Dec. 1. For location information
and to RSVP, contact info@indykids.org.
212-592-0116 • indykids.org

SAT NOV 17

7:30pm • \$18 sugg

CONCERT: WOODY GUTHRIE CENTENNIAL
TRIBUTE. Come listen to Woody Guthrie
songs performed by Toby Fagenson, Ray
Korona, Joel Landy, Anne Price, Steve Suffet
and Gina Tlamsa. All proceeds benefit the
Peoples' Voice Cafe. No one turned away for
lack of funds.
Peoples Voice Cafe at The Community

Church of New York Unitarian Universalist
40 E 35th St
212-787-3903 • peoplesvoicecafe.org

WED NOV 28

7pm • \$54 and up

EVENT: RABBI MARSHALL T. MEYER
RISK-TAKER AWARDS.
Join Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
(JFREJ) as they honor and celebrate the
work of activists whose courage and com-
mitment inspires and challenges us all. This
year's honorees are JFREJ founding director
Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, social justice
activist Eric Ward and ACT-UP.
Congregation B'nai Jeshurun
257 W 88th St
212-647-8966 • info@jfrej.org

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CALENDAR VIA EMAIL AT
INDYPENDENT.ORG.**

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT ?

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WBAI - 99.5 FM
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DC 37 Headquarters
125 Barclay St.

Seward Park Library
192 E. Broadway at Jefferson
St.

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

LES People's Federal Credit
Union
39 Avenue B

Whole Earth Bakery
130 St. Mark's Pl.

Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

Mamoun's Falafel
Restaurant
22 St. Mark's Pl.

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

Shakespeare & Co.
716 Broadway

Hudson Park Library
66 Leroy St.

Brecht Forum
451 West St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Epiphany Library
228 E. 23rd St.

Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.

Chelsea Square Restaurant
W. 23rd St. & Ninth Ave.

Columbus Library
942 Tenth Ave.

Manhattan Neighborhood
Network
537 W. 59th St.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

Bloomingdale Library
150 W. 100th St.

Book Culture
526 W. 112th St.

Harlem Library
9 W. 124th St.

George Bruce Library
518 W. 125th St.

Hamilton Grange Library
503 W. 145th St.

Uptown Sister's Books
W. 156th St. & Amsterdam

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.

Brooklyn Library
1044 Eastern Pkwy.

Long Island University
1 University Plaza

Tea Lounge
Union St. & Seventh Ave.

Verb Café
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Pacific Street Library
25 Fourth Ave.

Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.

Kaisa's Café
146 Bedford Ave.

Bedford Library
496 Franklin Ave.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

QUEENS

Court Square Diner
45-30 23rd St.

Diversity Center
77-11 37th St.

CUNY Law School
2 Court Sq.

Brandworkers
45-02 23rd St., 2nd Fl.

Aubergine Cafe
49-12 Skillman Ave.

Philippine Forum
40-21 96th St.

BRONX

Brook Park
141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mott Haven Library
321 E. 140th St.

Mi Casa Bakery
18 E. Bedford Park Blvd.

STATEN ISLAND

St. George Library Center
5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Library
75 Bennett St.

Everything Goes Book Café
208 Bay St.

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FOR FREE PEOPLE**

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Unchaining Minds

PHOTOS & TEXT BY BABITA PATEL

OSSINING, New York — During the 1990s, tough-on-crime crime politicians in states across the country eliminated public funding for prisoner education. New York was no exception, even though prisoners who earn a college degree behind bars are far more likely to go on and lead productive, crime-free lives after their release. Since 1998, Hudson Link, a nonprofit organization, and Mercy College have teamed up to offer accredited college degree programs at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Currently, 132 men are enrolled. The annual expense of educating a prisoner is less than one-tenth of what it costs to lock him up and — the outcome can be priceless.



STAFFING: Alumnus Douglas Duncan (right) confers with Academic Coordinator Arlene Mohamed (left) on the clerical and administrative needs of the program. Prisons are self-contained worlds in which inmates run almost all work assignments.



HITTING THE BOOKS: Some of the men are the first members in their families to get a college education. Sean Pica, executive director of Hudson Link, says “Education changes a man from someone the community does not want as a neighbor into someone valued as a friend.”



BY THE BOOK: The curriculum, textbooks and placement exams for each class exactly duplicate those taught on the campus of Mercy College based in nearby Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.



KNOT A PROBLEM: Alumni like Rashan Smalls help coordinate the graduation ceremony. They enjoy the festivities, the chance to put on a tie and the time they spend with family and friends.



HIGH NOTE: Students who participate in Carnegie Hall’s Musical Connections program prepare to play “Pomp and Circumstance” for a new group of graduates.



ROLE MODEL: Isaias Irazary, class salutatorian, meets his three-month-old niece for the first time at his college graduation.

Chinatown Group Demands 100% Low-Income Housing on Lower East Side Site

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

The City Council voted unanimously Oct. 11 to approve a massive Lower East Side development plan, but neighborhood activists vow to keep pushing for 100 percent low-income housing on the site.

The plan for the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area, on the south side of Delancey Street near the Williamsburg Bridge, is for a mix of residential buildings and big-box stores. It would include 900 to 1,000 apartments, half of them market-rate — renting for as much as \$6,000 a month — and half “affordable.”

“Why does the city insist on approving a plan that benefits the rich?” responded Yolanda Donato of the Coalition to Protect Chinatown & the Lower East Side, speaking in Spanish at a press conference the next day. Speaking in Chinese, Fung Yee Chan of the Chinese Staff and Workers Association added that the council “completely ignored the demands of this community for low-income housing and affordable spaces.”

The city’s definition of “affordable” is misleading, they say. Two-fifths of the “affordable” units in the plan are slated as middle-class housing, for people who make \$100,000 to \$130,000 a year, and will rent for \$2,500 to \$3,250. One-fifth would be reserved for elderly people. The other two-fifths would be “low-income” housing, for people who make around \$40,000 a year and could pay \$1,000 rent.

But \$40,000 is actually the median household income in Chinatown and the Lower East Side, says coalition organizer JoAnn Lum, and many residents make only \$15,000 or \$20,000. People are living doubled and tripled up in apartments, and the waiting list for public housing is years long. Building more luxury apartments will also lead to further displacement of low-income residents and small businesses, she adds.

“There’s a dire need,” she says. “It should be 100 percent low-income.” And because the site is public land, she contends, building low-income housing on it is both a moral obligation and more viable financially than it would be on private land. The coalition says it has collected 8,000 signatures on a petition calling for 100 percent low-income housing on the site.

The city’s political and real-estate establishment considers that demand wildly impractical. City-subsidized housing developments are usually 80 percent luxury and 20 percent low-income, with the ones that are half “affordable,” such as Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn, having a higher proportion of “middle-income” apartments that rent for more than \$2,000. City Councilmember Margaret Chin, who represents Chinatown, has called the idea of 100 percent low-income housing “crazy,” and her spokesperson challenged opponents to “please let us know” if they find a developer willing to build that, the *New York Observer* reported.

In September, however, Chinatown businessman Ben Wong, founder of the Wok & Roll fast-food chain, announced that he wanted to build entirely low-income housing on the site. His plan, backed by the coalition, would also include a depot for the

low-priced “Chinatown buses.”

Wong has not provided a definite plan for how he would finance his idea, but says he wants to do something for the community, and he has built two hotels in Chinatown, says Lum. His idea, notes Lower East Side activist Rob Hollander, challenges the city’s assumption that “developers would need market-rate units to float the regulated low-income units.”

The site, known as SPURA, is the largest undeveloped area in Manhattan south of 96th Street. It was designated as an urban-renewal area in 1965, but political conflict between those who wanted no low-income housing and those who wanted all affordable housing tied up redevelopment plans so the land has been vacant or used for parking lots for decades. The Bloomberg administration presented its 50-50 plan as a compromise. Community Board 3, which covers the Lower East Side and Chinatown, endorsed the plan in May, after gaining assurance that all the affordable units be permanent.

The council vote doesn’t mean the city’s plan is a done deal, says Lum. The city has not yet issued a formal “request for proposals” for the site, and when it does, Wong will present his plan.

“There’s still room to shape this project in the way our community wants it to be,” she says. “It’s really about the political will.”



STEVEN WISHNIA

UNHEEDED: Mei Rong Song of the Chinatown Small Business Alliance, which also supports calls for 100 percent low-income housing to be built on the site of the Seward Park Urban Recovery Area.

The War at Home



ELLEN DAVIDSON

PEACE, OUT: Mike Hastie, Vietnam War Army medic (1970-71), was among 25 arrested for being at Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza after its official closing time Oct. 7. Veterans were at the memorial to commemorate those killed in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and other U.S. wars of aggression as the war in Afghanistan enters its 12th year. They were arrested while reading the names of the war dead and placing flowers at the memorial. See stopthesewars.org for more information.

Barclays Bait and Switch

NEW ARENA ARRIVES WITH A STRING OF BROKEN PROMISES

BY DANIEL GOLDSTEIN

The Barclays Center opened to much hype and hoopla on Sept. 28. While Jay-Z rapped inside about his 99 problems and lasers lit up the Brooklyn sky, about 250 Brooklynites gathered a half block away at the Dean Street Playground to watch a screening of the documentary feature film *Battle for Brooklyn*.

It was two parallel universes: one where bread and circuses are enough, the other saw an audience seeking an honest accounting of the eight-year fight against the Atlantic Yards land grab that produced the hulking arena sitting squat at the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush Avenues, and the demolition zone behind it.

Near the film's finale, Mayor Michael Bloomberg holds forth at the March 2010 arena groundbreaking ceremony, "Nobody's going to remember how long it took, they're only gonna look and see that it was done."

Actually, no.

Between the success of *Battle for Brooklyn* (Oscar short-listed, now taught at 77 universities, soon available on iTunes and later Netflix) and the ongoing efforts of groups such as Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, Atlantic Yards will go down in history as a gross government giveaway that abused democratic practices in order to enrich a private developer at public expense.

'BUILT FROM SCRATCH'

Nearly nine years ago, developer Bruce Ratner stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Bloomberg, Gov. George Pataki, Sen. Chuck Schumer, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz and former New York Knicks star Bernard King to unveil Frank Gehry's model of 16 skyscrapers and an arena. Gehry described it as a "neighborhood built from scratch" even though there were almost 1,000 people living in the proposed project footprint — many of whom had been there for generations — and 35 small businesses.

Ratner was given 22 acres of prime Brooklyn real estate, hundreds of millions of dollars in public subsidies, eminent domain and a zoning override without the vote of a single elected official in return for his promise that in ten years the mega-project would yield 2,250 affordable housing units, 10,000 permanent jobs and eight acres of "privately owned, publicly accessible open space." To date the Atlantic Yards project has achieved the following:

- 105 full-time arena jobs and 1,900 part-time, non-living wage jobs with no benefits have been created, according to Ratner's firm.
- Not a single unit of housing has been constructed.
- The build-out time for the project has been extended from 10 years to 25.
- After repeated false starts over 18 months, groundbreaking for the first residential tower on the site was announced for mid-November or December. Ratner has said it could take two years to build. Only nine of the 386 units will be reserved for families earning Brooklyn's median income.

Unfortunately, like the Cheshire cat, all that's left of this boondoggle is the smiling arena, housing nobody, and a festering demolition zone, which will persist for decades.

MY FORMER HOME

Me? The black-and-white Brooklyn Nets logo sits on center court, which was once my home. It was taken after my co-plaintiffs and I lost a protracted federal and state court battle to thwart government abuse of eminent domain. For over seven years I continued living in the condo apartment I owned inside the project footprint and attempted to use it to stop Ratner's scheme.

But now the logo sits in the spot where I first brought my daughter home from the hospital, and where I first enjoyed a home-cooked dinner with my wife. That spot where games will tip off, once my living room, was sacred and joyous for me until the Empire State Development Corporation took ownership of it on March 1, 2010, and subsequently evicted me.

None of this was necessary. Ratner could have built the arena on top of the existing Vanderbilt railyard and his own mall properties without confiscating additional properties. Or the MTA could have accepted the higher bidder who had proposed a version of a community-created plan over the railyards, but he rigged the bidding process and

halted that effort.

The community's resistance to Atlantic Yards was sustained not by displeasure with the project's proposed density, scale and use. Those inappropriate dimensions were simply the symptoms of a corrupt process. Our opposition was about what is plaguing us nationwide: crony capitalism, broken politics and top-down decision-making that ignores individuals and communities.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Using the mantra of "Jobs, Housing and Hoops" to convince courts and politicians, Ratner cleverly divided the community by making promises he did not intend to keep. Groups like the now defunct ACORN and Brooklyn United for Innovative Local Development (BUILD), which negotiated a toothless Community Benefits Agreement with Ratner, remain silent.

Meanwhile, a vibrant coalition of grassroots organizations including Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, Brooklyn Speaks and Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE) are organizing to hold Ratner and his political allies accountable. If Ratner cannot keep his end of the bargain, the remaining 16-18 acres at the Atlantic Yards site should be taken back from him and given to other developers. A large portion of that land is still under MTA control, as Ratner hasn't paid for it, so this could be a politically viable idea.

On the day after the film screening, FUREE led a march through downtown Brooklyn to Barclays Arena to press our demands for good jobs and truly affordable housing. In the coming months we will be preparing responses to the new court-ordered Environmental Review of the project and agitating for political change to wrest control of the site from Forest City Ratner.

We'll continue this struggle because the Atlantic Yards project has always been about much more than an arena and a basketball team. If anything, this generational battle is still in the first quarter.

To find out more or to get involved, visit developdontdestroy.org, brooklynsspeaks.net, furee.org, ay-crimescene.com, call (718) 362-4784 or email contact@dddb.net.

Daniel Goldstein is a co-founder and spokesperson for Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn. He is also one of the central characters in the movie *Battle for Brooklyn*.



Mikhail Prokhorov, owner of the Brooklyn Nets.

NBA NOMADS

The Nets' move to Brooklyn has always been more about a real estate power play than basketball. But who is the team that a community was uprooted to make way for?

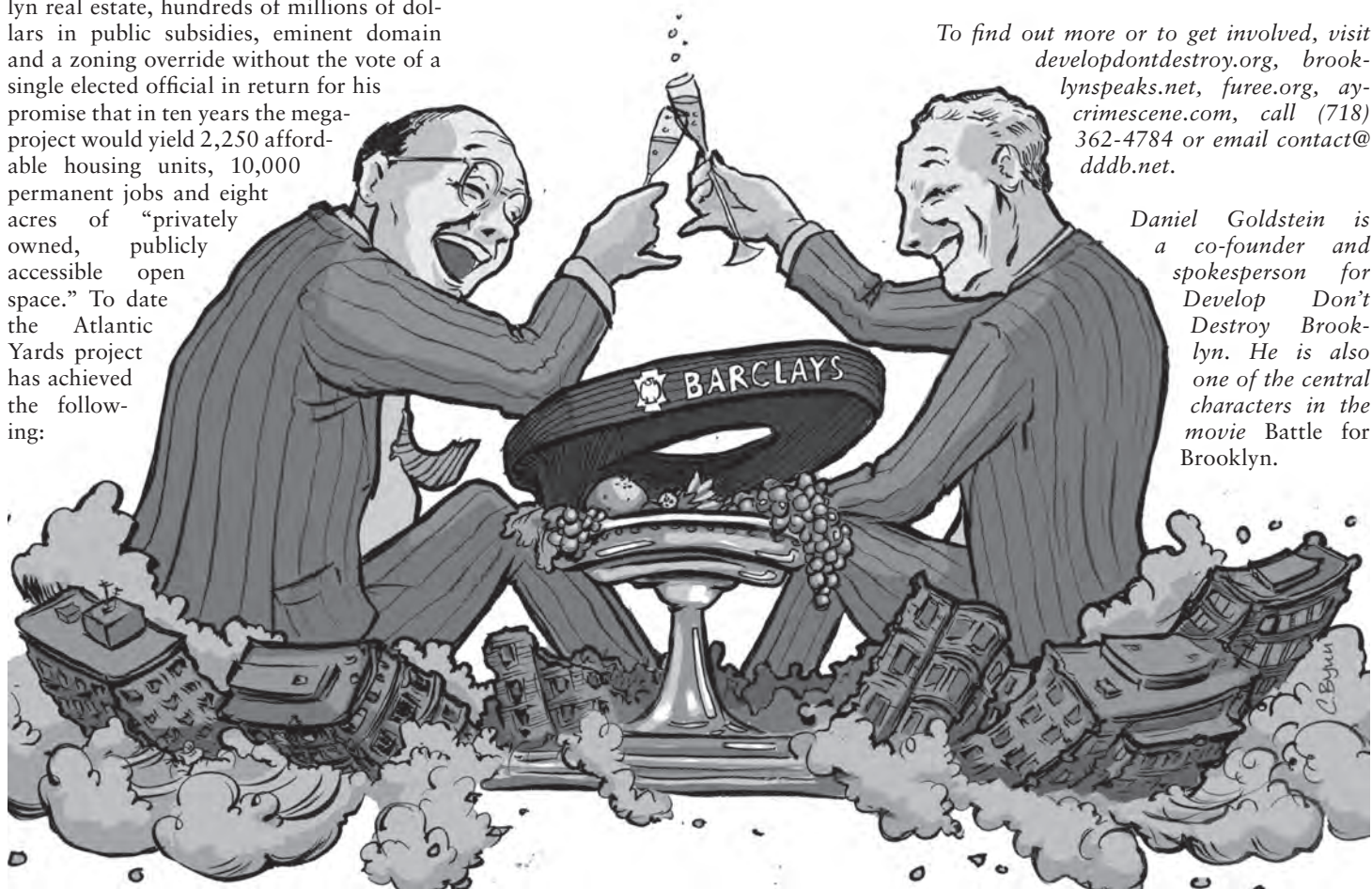
The New Jersey Americans (as the Nets were originally known) first played in 1967 in Teaneck, N.J. as a founding member of the American Basketball Association (ABA), a rival league to the NBA. The following year the franchise changed its name to the New York Nets as the team headed for Long Island where it knocked around for almost a decade playing in faceless suburban towns — Commack, West Hempstead and finally Uniondale.

In 1973, the Nets acquired Julius Erving. "Dr. J" was an early model Michael Jordan whose leaping, above-the-rim style of play and all-around excellence made him the ABA's premiere player. Erving carried the Nets to two championships in three seasons but the team's owners sold their franchise's greatest player for \$3 million in cold cash when the team was absorbed into the NBA in 1976. A quarter century of mostly dismal play ensued. In 1977, the Nets moved back to New Jersey, playing in Piscataway for four seasons before taking up residence in a new arena in the Meadowlands.

The Nets had a rare burst of success in the early 2000s as the team made consecutive appearances in the NBA finals. However, when Bruce Ratner purchased the team in 2004 and announced it would move to a new arena in Brooklyn in 2006, the team's jilted fans began to melt away.

The Nets final years in New Jersey saw huge losses on the basketball court — where the team sank to a 12-70 record in 2009-2010 — and on the bottom line as fans stayed away in droves. With the Atlantic Yards project on the verge of collapsing in 2009, Ratner sold an 80 percent stake in the team to Mikhail Prokhorov, a billionaire Russian oligarch. The Nets' last Jersey address was in Newark. On April 26, 2012, they played their final home game there (a loss). The NBA's most nomadic team was ready to move on...once again.

—John Tarleton



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STATE

Federal Judge Rules 2004 RNC Mass Arrests Unconstitutional



LAWLESS: Another day at the office for New York's finest.

By DAVE LINDORFF

On the morning of the big march through midtown Manhattan on the opening day of the Republican National Convention in New York City in 2004, a few friends and I met for breakfast at a little coffee shop near 96th Street on the Upper West Side. We had a few homemade signs and were clearly headed for a political action. Across from us were three police officers, carrying riot helmets, eating breakfast. They were clearly on their way to the same place.

After we had finished our breakfasts, we all headed for the subway. We ended up seated across from the group of cops on a downtown train.

Each of the cops had a bag. I asked one of them what was in his. He reached in and pulled out a big fistful of white nylon handcuff straps — the kind favored by police for mass arrests, with slip-tight ridges that allow the arresting officer to yank the handcuffs so tight they can only be removed by cutting.

"I see you're prepared for a lot of arrests," I said.

"Yeah," he replied. "We're ready for you!"

"Well, don't arrest us when you see us!" I said.

The officer smiled.

As it turns out, none of us were arrested, but hundreds of marchers were. The bags of cuffs the officers were carrying made it clear that this was the city's intention from the outset.

On Oct. 1, eight years after the march, a federal judge ruled that the mass arrests were illegal, violating the probable-cause requirement inherent in the Fourth Amendment.

As Judge Richard J. Sullivan wrote in a 32-page opinion, "An individual's participation in a lawbreaking group may, in appropriate circumstances, be strong circumstantial evidence of that individual's own illegal conduct," but no matter the circumstances, "an arresting officer must believe that every individual arrested personally violated the law. Nothing short of such a finding can justify arrest. The Fourth Amendment does not recognize guilt by association."

However, the ruling was not a complete victory. Judge Sullivan rejected the plaintiffs' claim that their First Amendment rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom to seek redress for grievances had been violated by the mass arrests. Nonetheless, lawyers for the plaintiffs said the ruling was a strong blow against the increasingly

common police tactic of mass arrests during demonstrations. Christopher T. Dunn, a lawyer with the New York Civil Liberties Union who represented some of the victims of the arrests, said the judge's ruling had "emphatically rejected the city's claim that it could make mass arrests of protestors."

Of course, since the 2004 RNC protests, there have been many more mass arrests in New York — especially since Mayor Michael Bloomberg has taken a tough line against demonstrations. This has been particularly true over the past year of Occupy Wall Street protests, where police have been aggressive in not only arresting but also brutalizing protestors by using pepper spray and physical force.

While Judge Sullivan's ruling is an important legal blow for protestors' rights, the fact that it was eight years in coming diminishes it significantly. The reality is that police in New York and in cities across the country — and the authorities who order them to block demonstrators' constitutionally protected right to protest — don't really care much about legalities. They realize that they can act with almost complete impunity, including locking up demonstrators for a day or longer to get them off the streets (as they did in 2004), and pay the penalty later.

The judge has yet to fine the city for its violation of the plaintiffs' Fourth Amendment rights, as well as to decide whether to issue an injunction against such mass arrests in the future. While the city could appeal Sullivan's decision — including any possible injunction — it may simply accept the judgment since if it were upheld on appeal, it would then be binding for the whole circuit, which encompasses New York, Connecticut and Vermont. The case could also then be cited as a precedent in arguments by plaintiffs in mass-arrest cases anywhere in the country.

While one federal judge's ruling against the practice is a step in the right direction, there are many steps being taken in the wrong direction all the time.

Unless more Americans start to pay attention to the way political authorities are trashing basic civil liberties in order to repress dissent, the day may yet come when any two people with a sign could find themselves being tackled and hauled off to jail.

Dave Lindorff is an investigative reporter, a columnist for CounterPunch, and a contributor to Businessweek, The Nation, Extra! and Salon.com.

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PEOPLE'S LAWYER

OBAMA SEEKS POWER TO INDEFINITELY DETAIN

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

President Obama cannot tell a lie — at least not according to his Department of Justice. The department changed tactics after a dramatic Sept. 12 ruling by U.S. District Judge Katherine Forrest declaring unconstitutional the portion of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that authorizes indefinite detention without trial of those who “substantially support ... forces engaged in hostilities against the U.S. or its coalition partners.” Forrest had granted a permanent injunction against the enforcement of this statute in a First Amendment suit brought by Chris Hedges, Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg and other activists against the 2012 NDAA. Judge Forrest was forced to issue this unusual constitutional ruling at a pre-trial stage of the lawsuit because of the tactics of the administration lawyers, who flatly refused to address Judge Forrest’s questions about who might be subject to detention under the vague wording of the act. After being stonewalled five times by the Department of Justice lawyers, she reluctantly concluded that Hedges, who has interviewed and quoted members of Hamas and other designated terrorists for his books, faced the possibility of running afoul of the law without knowing how to avoid its provisions.

However, in its pre-trial appeal of Forrest’s injunction, the government changed tactics and asserted that it had no intention of prosecuting journalists or organizers such as Kai Wargalla, an activist on behalf of Julian Assange. The fact that the DoJ offered this assertion only on appeal, only after District Judge Forrest held a hearing on the constitutional dangers, is unbecoming at best. It is unseemly for government lawyers to change their theory of the case midstream, and it is improper for any lawyer to offer new facts at the appeals stage, as it is the trial judge’s role to determine facts and decide who is telling the truth.

As previously reported on *The Independent*’s website (Sept. 28), Judge Forrest gave

the government ample opportunity to state that it did not interpret the NDAA as authorizing the detention of persons engaged in classic First Amendment activities like reporting and demonstrating. This question was clearly before Judge Forrest who, as a federal judge, was well aware of the Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* and its potential for criminalizing even legal advice as “material support.” So it must be concluded that the DoJ’s refusal to answer her question of what “substantially support” means in this case was deliberate strategy on the part of the Obama Administration.

This should give us all pause as it means the administration is truly seeking the vast expansion of executive power that the vagueness in the law would enable.

This unusual showdown between the executive branch and the judiciary is all the more galling because of the bait-and-switch, forcing a constitutional ruling from the District Judge and then backpedaling in the Appeals Court. As a practical matter, Judge Forrest, to whom the case will be returned for further development of the record, will now be very hard pressed to hold the government’s earlier assertions (or, in the face of the stakes at hand, non-assertions) against it. She will

almost certainly have to give Obama a pass and accept its belated statements of good intentions. Unfortunately for the plaintiffs and for activists and journalists, the government’s “switch in time” will deprive Judge Forrest of a basis to issue a constitutional ruling. What the government had allowed to develop into a clear confrontation will now likely fail for lack of proof that the journalists are likely be detained in the future.

Ann Schneider is a member of the NYC Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild (nlgny.org). The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the position of the organization as a whole.

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Outsider Voices

By Alex Kane

Tens of millions of Americans tuned in to the three presidential debates that took place during October, with the last one held on Oct. 22. But what voters didn't see are the third-party alternatives to Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, who for all the minor differences between them share a similar vision of a corporate state that caters to the rich, strip mines our environment and wages endless war.

In New York, four third-party candidates will be on the ballot. Their views provide a refreshing counterpoint to the stale debate Americans have been treated to during the past year and a half of the presidential campaign.



JILL STEIN, GREEN PARTY

A physician, an environmental activist and a former Massachusetts gubernatorial candidate who debated Mitt Romney in 2002, Jill Stein is bringing her message of full employment and Medicare for all to millions of voters this year. Stein and her running mate, a formerly homeless anti-poverty activist named Cheri Honkala, will be on the ballot in at least 37 states come November. Both Stein and Honkala support the Occupy Wall Street movement. “[The] machine that is driving our economy and our climate over the cliff is bought and paid for by Wall Street,” Stein told *Mother Jones* on the first anniversary of OWS. To counter this, Stein’s campaign is calling for a “Green New Deal.” Inspired by Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal, the Green Party’s version calls for massive, government-led investments with a goal of full employment and a transition to a post-carbon economy based on renewable energy sources. Stein is also calling for financial reform and the breakup of big banks and measures to democratize U.S. politics. Other parts of the Green Party platform include rejecting cuts to Medicare and Social Security; tuition-free education; a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions; and the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. For more, see jillstein.org.



PETA LINDSAY, PARTY FOR SOCIALISM AND LIBERATION

Peta Lindsay is not legally eligible to hold the presidency (the minimum age is 35), but that’s not stopping the only woman of color on the New York presidential ballot from trying to inject socialism into the debate. Lindsay is only 28, but she has a wealth of social justice organizing under her belt. A graduate of Howard University, Lindsay cut her teeth doing anti-war organizing in the aftermath of September 11. She was a youth leader with the ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and a founding member of the Party for Socialism and Liberation. Her running mate, Yari Osorio, is a Colombian-born U.S. citizen who is an organizer with ANSWER and an Occupy activist. In addition to New York, Lindsay and Osorio are on the ballot in 12 other states.

As the centerpiece of her campaign, Lindsay calls for expropriating the largest private banks and creating a people’s bank that would fund a jobs program, cancel student debt, provide free education and end all foreclosures. The PSL candidate also wants to shut down all U.S. military bases around the globe, halt police brutality, abolish all anti-immigrant laws and implement full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. For more, see pslweb.org.



GARY JOHNSON, LIBERTARIAN PARTY

Under the banner of “minimum government, maximum freedom,” Libertarians oppose overseas military actions like the war in Afghanistan, call for the end of the Drug War and support marriage equality. They also want to do away with income taxes, government social programs and government regulation of everything from clean air and water to shady Wall Street practices. Their standard bearer this year is Gary Johnson, a former two-term governor of New Mexico who trumpets his fiscal conservatism everywhere he goes. Johnson briefly contended for the Republican presidential nomination but dropped out in late 2011 to become the Libertarian Party presidential nominee. His running mate, James Gray, is a former judge and an ardent Drug War critic. The Libertarian ticket will be on the ballot in at least 47 states. Johnson and Gray are hoping to steal some of Ron Paul’s supporters now that the libertarian idol has dropped out of the presidential race.

Six Third Party Candidates to Remember

VICTORIA WOODHULL (1872) EQUAL RIGHTS PARTY

Victoria Woodhull shocked the patriarchal assumptions of America’s political and media establishment when she leapt into the 1872 presidential race as the candidate of the Equal Rights Party. Already the first woman to publish a newspaper in the United States, Woodhull was a fierce advocate for women’s sexual autonomy and the right of women to divorce their husbands. Tarrd by the press as the “free love” candidate, Woodhull was jailed days before the election by the New York City police. There is no record of how many votes she received or even whether they were counted.



JAMES WEAVER (1892) POPULIST PARTY

Fired by the grievances of small farmers against Eastern bankers and railroad monopolies, the Populist movement swept across large swaths of the South, West and Great Plains in the late 1880s. It reach its high point in 1892 when Populist Party presidential candidate James Weaver received more than 1 million votes and won five states. The Populists faded out of existence within a few years but some of the causes they championed including the graduated income tax, direct election of senators, initiative, referendum and recall were all later enacted.



GEORGE EDWIN TAYLOR (1904) NATIONAL NEGRO LIBERTY PARTY

The son of a former slave, George Edwin Taylor was a lowa-based labor leader and newspaper publisher who left the Democratic Party in 1904 to become the first black to run for the White House. Taylor won few votes but his candidacy showed that an independent black politics was possible at a time when both major parties were embracing the establishment of the Jim Crow system.



EUGENE DEBS (1904, 1908, 1912, 1920) SOCIALIST PARTY

A former railroad workers union leader, Eugene Debs received 6 percent of the vote in 1912, the high-water mark for the Socialist Party. Debs and other socialists were targeted by the government for opposing U.S. entry into World War I as a “capitalist war.” Debs received a 10-year prison sentence for speaking out against the draft and ran his last presidential campaign in 1920 from a federal prison cell in Atlanta from which he managed to garner more than 900,000 votes.





VIRGIL GOODE, CONSTITUTION PARTY

For Tea Party types dissatisfied with Mitt Romney, Virgil Goode might be their man. A former six-term congressman from southern Virginia, Goode made headlines in 2006 after criticizing Keith Ellison, the first Muslim elected to Congress, for using the Qu'ran during his swearing-in ceremony. A year later he warned from the floor of Congress of "radical Muslims" who want to control the world and put "In Muhammad We Trust" on U.S. currency.

These days, Goode is the standard bearer for the Constitution Party, a right-wing, religiously conservative party that champions deep cuts in government spending and an end to almost all immigration. Goode and his running mate Jim Clymer are also opposed to gay marriage and abortion and want to end international trade agreements. Like the other third parties on New York's ballot, the Constitution Party rejects U.S. intervention around the world. Goode and Clymer will appear on the ballot in at least 25 states.

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RIGGING BALLOT ACCESS

The two major-party candidates both receive around-the-clock media coverage and have hundreds of millions of dollars at their disposal. As if that isn't enough, the election game is skewed by ballot access laws enacted by Republican and Democratic lawmakers that vary state by state but make getting on the ballot an arduous process for third-party candidates.

In New York, candidates could automatically get on the ballot this year if their parties had received at least 50,000 votes during the last gubernatorial election in 2010. A third party can also gain access to the ballot if candidates collect at least 15,000 valid signatures during a five-week stretch in the middle of the summer with at least 100 signatures each coming from at least half of the state's 27 congressional districts.

Other states are worse. Georgia requires a candidate to garner 1 percent of the total amount of eligible registered voters from last election. This year, that's about 58,000 signatures. In North Carolina, candidates have to collect signatures equal to 2 percent of the total votes cast in the last governor's election or about 85,000 signatures. The worst offender? That's probably Oklahoma. The Sooner State requires a third party to get signatures of registered voters that equal at least five percent of the votes cast for the office at the top of the previous statewide election, or this year almost 52,000 signatures in a sparsely inhabited state with one fifth the population of New York.

—A.K.

GEORGE WALLACE (1968) AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY

Third-party campaigns can help move marginal ideas into the mainstream. But that doesn't mean they are always progressive ones. In 1968, Alabama Gov. George Wallace ran as the candidate of the white backlash against the civil rights movement, winning more than 13 percent of the national vote and five Southern states. Wallace also fared well in parts of the North, prefiguring the rise of white ethnic "Reagan Democrats" who would help propel the conservative movement to power in the 1980s.



RALPH NADER (2000) GREEN PARTY

Riding the wave of protests following the November 1999 "Battle of Seattle," legendary anti-corporate crusader Ralph Nader ran a spirited third party campaign that filled arenas with thousands of cheering supporters and brought the Green Party into the national spotlight for the first time. Many Democrats blame Nader for costing Al Gore Florida's 25 electoral votes and the presidency. Others note that Gore still would have won if he had taken his home state of Tennessee or fought harder to prevent Republican dirty tricks during the Florida recount process.



— JOHN TARLETON



Photo by Dave Hoefler

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BEYOND OBAMA POLITICS AND TRANSFERENCE

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

At an October 2008 Obama rally, Peggy Joseph, a black woman, held a palm to her chest and said, “I won’t have to worry about putting gas in my car. I won’t have to worry about paying my mortgage. If I help him, he’ll help me.”

Four years later at an October 2012 town hall debate an older black man, Michael Jones, said to the president, “I voted for you but today I’m not that optimistic. Most things I need for everyday living are very expensive.” At debate’s end, Obama walked offstage; a man whose election had electrified the world, now hung by fingertips to a slight lead in the polls.

The contrast between Obama the symbol and Obama the capitalist CEO has created our political crisis. For nearly 70 million U.S. voters and the millions who danced in the global street festivals of election night, he was living a dream. Today the West is on the edge of collapse. And the return of political apathy leaves people like Peggy Joseph and Michael Jones more vulnerable than before. If former Gov. Mitt Romney wins the presidency, he’ll dismantle the New Deal. If Obama wins he’ll make a Grand Bargain with Republicans to cut Social Security and Medicare to pay down the 16 trillion dollar federal deficit. Either way, no sustained public counter force — not even Occupy Wall Street — exists to block Republican greed or Obama’s vain need for a legacy. How did we get here?

POLITICS IS A SITE OF TRANSFERENCE

When you were young, did you believe in Santa Claus? As an adult, did you ever kneel and pray furiously to God? Did you feel like the Lord could see right through you and take away the weight of your secrets?

Many of us have experienced belief in someone who knows us better than we know ourselves. We outgrow the childish versions of it but the need to feel lifted from our lives stays with us, as does its opposite, the nightmare of being under surveillance by someone who knows our transgressions.

In adulthood that belief returns when a patient greets a therapist and nervous hope tingles in the handshake. He or she believes the analyst can read the secret of the confused pain s/he carries. It’s that hope that begins the transference, a key of psychoanalytic treatment, in which patients talk, reenact memories, and project repressed desires onto the therapist, who plays the Subject Supposed to Know.

The need to believe in someone larger than ourselves drives our politics. In the 2008 presidential campaign, then-Senator Obama openly talked of being not a black man so much as a “blank” man on which people projected their desires. When he first appeared on TVs across America, few cared, and initially Black America was skeptical. It was only after he seemed to know how to “read” whites that they, and soon a majority of voters, transferred onto him buried wishes for equal representation.

Every ideology or theology creates its own specific Subject Supposed to Know, a mythic figure that sums up the reality of its worldview by embodying it in flesh and bone. And we need this because human knowledge is innately inter-subjective. We often believe in gossip, political ideas or theories not because we know them to be true but out of our need to be desired by those who believe in them. Maybe a mother or father, maybe a teacher or pastor, maybe a friend or lover; whoever they are, we need them. So often, it’s not the truth of an idea that gives it credibility, but the fact that it is cherished by another whom we desire. The Subject Supposed to Know in its various versions is the guarantee of the truth of a knowledge, precisely because its validity is in the end not knowable, only our passionate need to believe is.

American liberalism had a Subject Supposed to Know; it was a unifier, someone who would solve class conflict by appealing to the “better angels of our nature.” And the prophetic tradition of the black church anticipated a “Joshua” figure that could complete the work of Moses-like Martin Luther King, who brought the people to the edge of a Promised Land that he could not enter. Both of these figures were merged and projected onto Obama.

He seemed to have a guaranteed knowledge of how to bring a nation fractured by racism, sexism and class together, but that’s the trick of transference. The Subject Supposed to Know never actually does anything — it’s the belief that they do that lifts a patient’s or voter’s buried desire to the surface. So when voters blinked, they saw not Obama the symbol but Obama the corporate liberal who in policy terms is farther right than Richard Nixon.

THE SUBJECT SUPPOSED TO FEAR

“No one’s ever asked to see my birth certificate,” Romney joked at a campaign stop in August. The audience laughed that this rich white man contrasted himself with the “secret” Kenyan, Muslim Obama. They

laughed at the not-so-coded racism. And they laughed at the millions of immigrants, gays, non-Christians, poor and brown people who stood behind Obama wanting to be Americans in full.

Romney’s use of code words signals to his supporters that he reads the secret desires boiling inside them, how they want special representation as “real” Americans. But when the rally ends, white working-class Republican voters return to a grim reality. It is the stress of endless bills, broken schools, falling life expectancy, low or no pay and the shame of welfare, all of which is traumatizing when contrasted against the promise of upward mobility. Add to that the loss of the “wages of whiteness,” the privileges that sustained one’s status in the absence of a high-paying job. Add to it the Muslim, black, Latino or Asian families moving across the street, who look to the first black president as their hero.

When the white working poor look through their windows, they don’t see their real neighbor but the Subject Supposed to be Feared. It’s a term cultural critic Slavoj Žižek used to describe the tales of black criminality during the flood of New Orleans, accounts that were not true but served as a guarantee of one’s racist mythology. It is the nightmare figure created by Fox News and talk radio that flows in code down from the business class of the Republican Party and is translated into the crude vitriol of Red State America.

It doesn’t matter if Romney is not a real believer. Few voters think he is. And it doesn’t matter because they’ll believe for him. They just need for him to give coded signals that he sees what they see, the Subject Supposed to be Feared, the nightmare Other, climbing the gates of the City on a Hill, trying to force entry and steal the back the land.

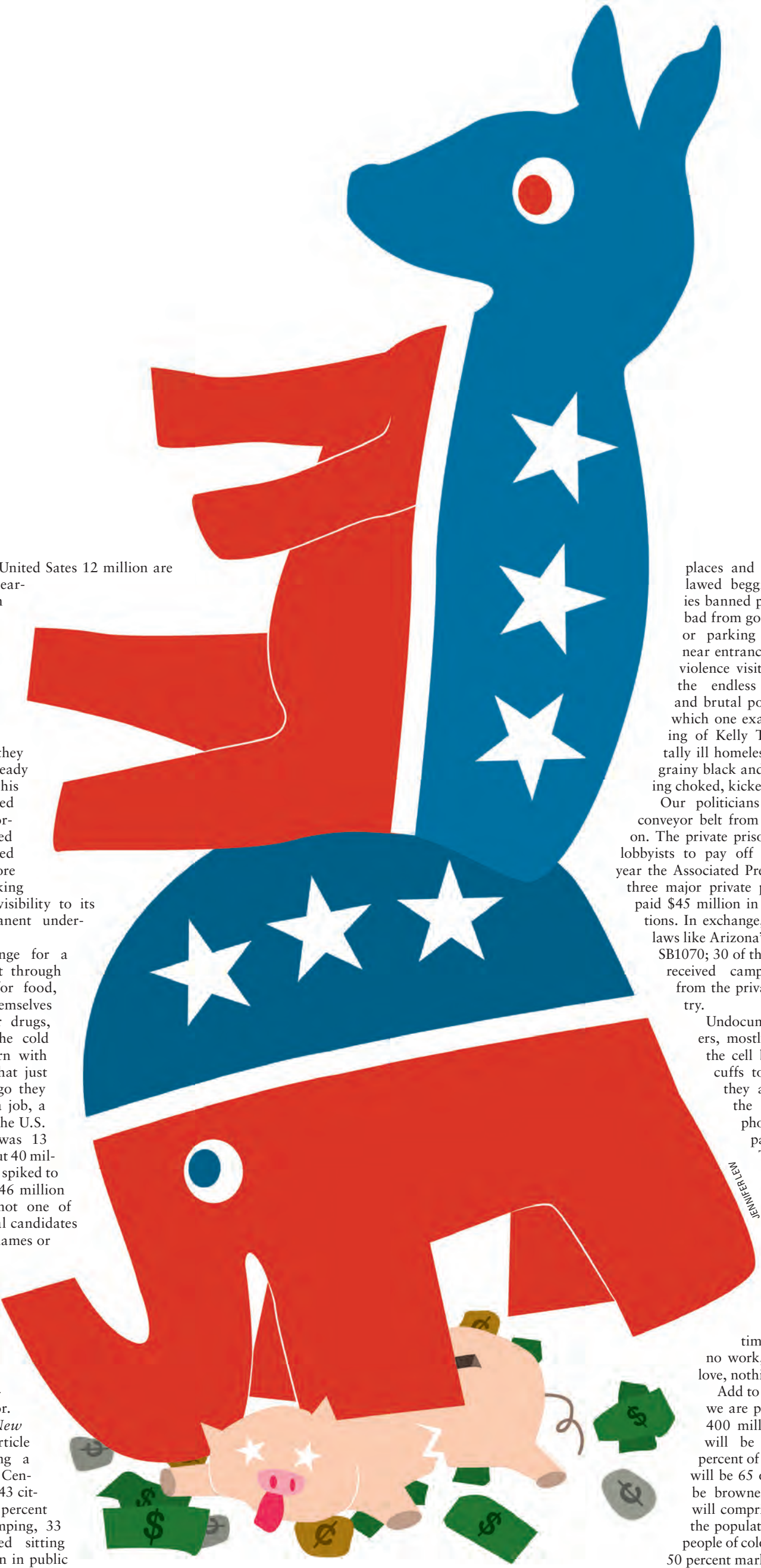
THE QUESTIONED FUTURE

Too often, political transference blinds. It is a theater built on top of a national puzzle of voting districts, filled with people whose emotional life is translated into the mythos of a political ideology. Many don’t see the system driving the world but only the mirrors held up by officials that reflect our dreams or nightmares. Behind the theater is a structural dynamic of a global capitalist system, whose Western epicenters are in crisis after switching from manufacturing to financial services. After trading in abstract housing debt, the West — specifically Europe — has cratered.

Here in the United States 12 million are unemployed, nearly 9 million are part-time and 2 million have stopped looking. It adds up to 23 million who are on the edge of poverty if they have not already fallen in. And this is what’s called the New Normal; the United States has added millions more who are sinking into social invisibility to its already permanent underclass.

They scrounge for a bed, they root through the garbage for food, they numb themselves with drink or drugs, they die in the cold and many burn with the memory that just a few years ago they had a home, a job, a life. In 2008, the U.S. poverty rate was 13 percent or about 40 million. In 2011 it spiked to 15 percent or 46 million people. And not one of our presidential candidates will say their names or even say that it’s a crisis or that people are dying.

Add to this the criminalization of the poor. A recent *New York Times* article reported, citing a National Law Center survey of 243 cities that “40 percent prohibited camping, 33 percent banned sitting and lying down in public



places and 53 percent outlawed begging.” Other cities banned people who smell bad from going into libraries or parking shopping carts near entrances. Add to it the violence visited on the poor, the endless stop-and-frisks and brutal police beatings, of which one example is the killing of Kelly Thomas, a mentally ill homeless man seen in a grainy black and white video being choked, kicked and murdered. Our politicians are creating a conveyor belt from poverty to prison. The private prison industry hires lobbyists to pay off politicians. Last year the Associated Press reported that three major private prison industries paid \$45 million in campaign donations. In exchange, politicians pass laws like Arizona’s anti-immigrant SB1070; 30 of the 36 co-sponsors received campaign donations from the private prison industry.

Undocumented workers, mostly Mexican, grip the cell bars, jangling in cuffs to the bus where they are taken across the border to hear phone calls from panicked families. The new poor, jailed for begging or sleeping in parks, are released only to become part of the New Jim Crow, stigmatized with prison time so they can get no work, no housing, no love, nothing.

Add to this that in 2050 we are projected to be at 400 million citizens. We will be grayer. Twenty percent of the United States will be 65 or older. We will be browner. Latinos alone will comprise 30 percent of the population. Collectively, people of color will breach the 50 percent mark and whites will

no longer be the majority.

If the New Normal becomes just “normal,” if the job market only grows fast enough to absorb the increase in population but no more, then the role of government will become a charged question. Does it have a responsibility to create work or not? How the public answers this will depend on how mass political will is mobilized. And one aspect of that, aside from the on-the-ground organizing is: who is the Subject Supposed to Know that the people will transfer their desires onto?

STARVING THE BEAST

Seeing the future, Republicans are trying “to shrink government down to the size where we can drown it in a bathtub.” The tactic is called “Starving the Beast;” the phrase came from an 1985 article in the *Wall Street Journal* quoting a Reagan administration official. The tactic is to cut taxes, especially on the wealthy, and then run up the deficit. When the federal budget is squeezed they turn around and demand cuts in social programs.

No wonder Reagan’s campaigns were loaded with coded racism; he reveled in telling white working-class audiences about “welfare queens” who drove Cadillacs on their way to pick up their government checks. It is a tactic repeated by Republicans everywhere, all the time. President George H.W. Bush did it with the infamous Willie Horton ad and recently Newt Gingrich did it by labeling Obama the “food stamp” president. By invoking the Subject Supposed to be Feared, the black criminal, the foreign Other, they can terrify white working-class voters into viewing the government as the tool of the internal enemy, which is why the recent imagery depicting President Obama as Hitler setting up Death Panels resonates.

Democracy is the avenue through which the New American Majority, brown, young and Spanish speaking, can use the state. The conservative goal is to kill the federal government, decentralizing power to private companies until the United States is a network of near-feudal corporate city-states, protected from an impoverished people by a bloated police force and if need be, the military. And the way to enact this vision is through the politics of fear.

THE SUBJECT SUPPOSED TO SAVE

“We need to put 25 million people back to work,” Green Party presidential nominee Jill Stein said, “through a Green new Deal.” She cites the \$700 billion bailout given to banks and says an amount that size could be chan-

neled to direct job creation. So the question is why hasn’t it?

Political will is created through transference, which itself needs a figure who can guarantee our knowledge of ourselves, as in Obama, or of the outside world, as in conservatives’ mythic black criminal. In order to mobilize the public to push for a Green Deal, a narrative frame will be needed for the victims of climate change.

One option is the Subject Supposed to be Feared, one predicted and prepared for by the Pentagon in a report on the security risks of a world destabilized by climate change. In the next 20 or 30 years, floods, shortages of food and clean water and storms could send millions of people into exile from their homes. And inside the United States, storms and droughts and soaring food prices will force the public to see once again the poor and vulnerable that have been made invisible. The question is how will they be seen? Will they be framed as dangerous, ragged hordes climbing over the walls?

The other option is the Subject Supposed to Save, figures of innocent suffering whose dilemma is not their fault. And that’s key, because the conservative frame of the poor posits that their poverty is due to their culture.

With New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, both narratives competed, but ultimately the thousands of black homeless people were viewed as innocent and thereby eligible for our sympathy. As the planet boils, floods hit, storms ravage and land dries up, those represented by the figure of the Subject Supposed to Save will become vital in political debates. The purity of their pain will guarantee their knowledge of what is real compassion. And we who are safe but guilty for being so will see in them our secret desire for absolution answered.

THE GREEN MILE

We’ve all heard the saying, “Without a vision, the people perish.” As the election nears, Obama dashes around the country, offering tepid liberalism. He strains to give voters his vision of tomorrow, but real political power runs in reverse. People have to transfer their desires outside of themselves and see them materialized. And polls show that voters want universal healthcare, the end of war, legalized marijuana, clean energy and funding for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Many Americans are more radical than their leaders, they just don’t see any way out, and without a vision they stumble in the dark.

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RACE

Wooing White America HOW THE GOP GRATIFIES THE EMOTIONS OF ITS SUPPORTERS

BY LINDA MARTÍN
ALCOFF

Is the Republican Party
trying to commit sui-
cide?

Despite well-publicized
demographic trends predict-
ing that the United States
will become a “minority-
majority” nation by 2042,
Republicans have been con-
ducting a vigorous slash-
and-burn campaign against
African-Americans, Latinos
and Native Americans.

By late August, there had
been enough racially tinged
attacks on President Obama
that NBC/*Wall Street Jour-
nal* polling reported an as-
tounding zero percent of Af-
rican-Americans expressing
support for Romney. After
the Republican nominee was
exposed for joking about
the political advantages he
would have if he could claim Latino heri-
tage, his support among Latinos dropped
from a high of 31 percent after the GOP
convention down to 24 percent, according
to a LatinoDecision/ImpreMedia poll. And,
although the number of Native Americans is
relatively small, the Republican tomahawk
chops and war whoops used to jeer Massa-
chusetts Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren
have dismayed many in Indian Country.

The fact is, it is difficult to sell the Re-
publican agenda to communities with high
unemployment rates, high incarceration
rates, and higher than average rates of fore-
closures. Spending cuts, tax cuts and the
unqualified opposition to healthcare re-
form and regulations on Wall Street are not
popular ideas in poor communities of color.
Voter suppression is not working too well
either, nor is the Republican block against
the Dream Act. There is not a lot of rhetori-
cal room to maneuver here, and no obvious
“spin” that might paint this policy agenda as
representing the interests of all Americans.

Republican political analysts have to
know the demographic changes that are
coming, which leads one to wonder: is there
a logic to the GOP’s madness, or have they
just decided to go down fighting as the last
(almost) all-white party?

ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Romney’s white working-class and poor
supporters should also see their economic
interests endangered by the Republican
agenda and a candidate known for breaking
up companies and bragging that he “likes”
to fire people. The largest numbers of poor
people in the United States are white, and
many of them are among the 47 percent
scorned by Romney.

Yet the Republican candidate continues to
enjoy a majority of the white vote (by 53 per-
cent to 40 percent). He also has a majority
of the senior vote (49 percent to 41 percent)
and the rural vote (47 percent to 38 percent),
two other groups that have rational reasons
to dislike the Republicans’ attitude toward
everything from Social Security and Medi-

care to closing rural post offices.

The Republicans apparently need no spin
to make these groups feel represented. Why?

POWER OF MYTH

In November 2010, when Republicans swept
the midterm elections a bare two years after
Obama’s historic win, *The New York Times*
ran a front-page article assessing four pos-
sible explanations for the Republican tri-
umph. Not one concerned race.

Just recently, Columbia University Pro-
fessor of Humanities Mark Lilla wrote a
critical review of Charles Kesler’s newly
published conservative screed, *I Am the
Change: Barack Obama and the Crisis of
Liberalism*, in which Kesler offers the rea-
soned arguments, so to speak, for conser-
vative dislike and distrust of Obama’s ex-
pansion of social welfare programs. Kesler
scrupulously avoids the issue of race, but
surprisingly, so does Lilla, who offers no
real rejoinder to Kesler’s explanations other
than to show how they are based in myth
rather than fact. The question remains, why
do the myths hold such sway?

Numerous theorists are beginning to ex-
plore the topic of “public feeling.” Rather
than predict votes by rational choice theory
applied to interest-group politics, we need
to pay more attention to the feelings evoked
by a candidate’s language and style. This is
not quite the dog-whistle idea, that coded
messages are sent to the faithful through
subtle word choice, but that feelings them-
selves can be mobilized to affect behavioral
choices by giving people new ideas about
who is their ally and who is their enemy
and what the payoff of a particular policy
agenda will be on their emotional well-
being and their sense of pride and impor-
tance and value.

RETHINKING AYN RAND

Consider the feelings evoked by Ayn Rand’s
blockbuster novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, a book
whose sales are second only to the Bible and
whose fervent followers famously include
vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan. New

York University sociology professor Lisa
Duggan suggests we think about Rand’s
novel not in terms of its terrible writing or
its cartoonish plotlines or its absurd em-
pirical claims about what makes capitalist
societies work; rather we should look at its
highly sexualized and exciting portrayal of
the greed-obsessed entrepreneur. Rand’s
novel presents a contrast not only of politi-
cal options but also of emotional personali-
ties. On the one side we have the staid and
domesticated forces that support regulation,
empathy, and self-sacrifice, coded maternal
and feminine, while on the other side we
have the arousal of a masculine rebel who
lives by his creative wits, the collective be-
damned. The choice is vanilla sex or trans-
gression, but gender identity, pride, self-es-
teem and the possibility of exhilaration are
also at stake.

What would you choose?

We need to expand our thinking about
rational judgment and understand that our
emotional lives constitute a self-interest too.
This is not an argument that the masses are
hopelessly irrational. We are all motivated
by our feelings. The idea that rational minds
can transcend feelings is based on a myth of
objective distancing that has its own emo-
tional payoff in feelings of inviolability and
security. The Republicans may be banking
on their capacity to mobilize feelings even
when their policy proposals make no eco-
nomic sense for the 99 percent, much less
the 47 percent. Whites are not the only
group susceptible to the appeal of Ameri-
can exceptionalism, or the masculine ethos
of hyper self-sufficiency espoused by randy
Randians who stride about asserting abso-
lutes without apology or qualification.

Linda Martín Alcoff is a Professor of Phi-
losophy at the City University of New York.
She is the author or editor of twelve books
including, *Visible Identities*; *Race, Gender
and the Self* and *Constructing the Nation*:
A Race and Nationalism Reader. To read
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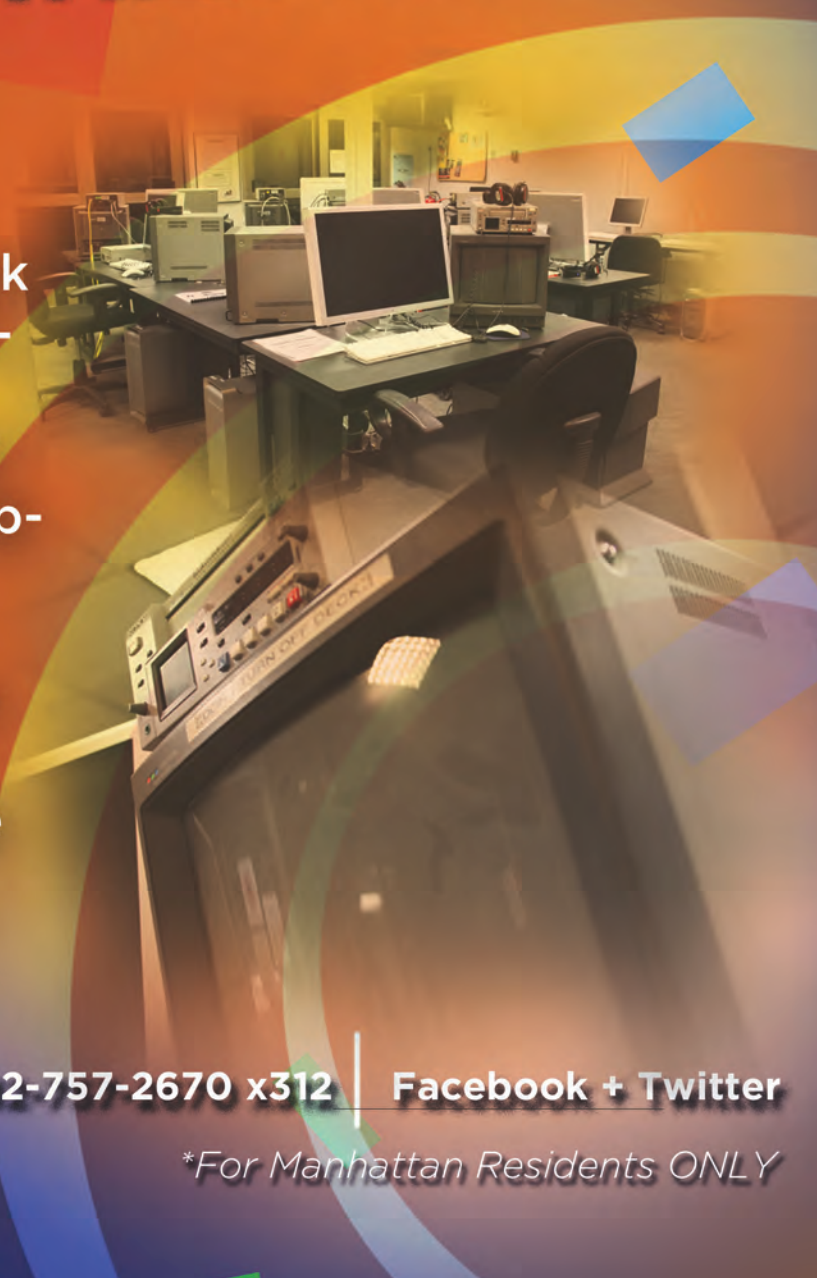
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Greece Between Austerity and Fascism

By Chris Spannos

ATHENS, Greece — The European Union has been awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. But it is today's Greek anti-fascist movement that deserves an award for doing what European states have so far failed to do — confronting the rise of violent neo-Nazi movements on the continent.

Although fascism is not new in Greece, it has seen a resurgence in the Golden Dawn party, which won 18 parliamentary seats in the last election. Some polls indicate that approximately half of Greek police support Golden Dawn and that the party enjoys legitimacy in wide social circles. Police sometimes even refer crime victims to Golden Dawn for follow-up on law enforcement and citizen protection.

Rising poverty and political instability have caused turmoil. Hostility towards foreigners has also been on the increase, helping the party achieve its growing popular support. Greece has experienced record-breaking job losses, with the official unemployment rate currently at 25 percent. More than half (54 percent) of workers 18 to 30 are unemployed. Countless more are underemployed. Mandatory military service provides a significant, albeit temporary, release valve for many youth who would otherwise also be unemployed.

The unemployment statistics do not, of course, reflect the hidden suffering of many more. Greece is a gateway for refugees and undocumented migrants making their way to Western Europe; they are not counted in the official statistics.

Playing on real social anxieties and insecurities, Golden Dawn has managed to carve out a leadership role for itself, in large part by terrorizing the country's weak and vulnerable and turning them into scapegoats for current social and economic woes. Golden Dawn MPs are known for their violent outbursts of public rage against immigrants and political opponents. Recently a friend came to me in shock after he was forced to leave the theater hosting the Athens premiere of Terrence McNally's play *Corpus Christi* (depicting Jesus as gay), which was shut down because of Golden Dawn protests outside. Upon leaving the theater he was confronted by two of the party's MPs and more than 100 of their supporters, including priests brandishing crosses — all hurling homophobic insults at those attending the play.

Center-right prime minister Antonis Sa-



THIS BOOT SMUSHES FASCISTS: Anti-Nazi graffiti in the Exarcheia section of Athens.

maras has cited Golden Dawn's ascendance as evidence that Greece could suffer the same rise in Nazism as Germany's Weimar Republic did in the 1930s after economic collapse. He has also said that he would not ban the party from participating in the electoral system. But many Greeks are concerned about the party's rise and express a need to do something about it.

"It is in everyone's mind to fight back against Golden Dawn but nobody was doing it," said one participant in a recent anti-fascist patrol. "We fought back and now people know that they can, too." This man participated in a brigade of 150 motorcycles, each carrying two riders and baseball-bat-sized poles flying red-and-black flags. The purpose of the brigade was to shake Golden Dawn's confidence that it is above the law and to show the world that a number

of people are committed to the fight against fascism in Greece. This patrol is just one of many different kinds of anti-fascist actions that are occurring more frequently around the country but have not yet reached a critical mass.

"Everyone is fighting for control over space," explained another anti-fascist activist. "Imagine a square. Everyone is fighting for their share of space in this square. We cannot let the fascists gain any of that space because if they do they will take more."

But the fascists have already won some level of state power. "Hitler first won the streets and then he won in the parliament," he said. "Golden Dawn has won in parliament but not yet on the streets. So we must fight them there."

Government-imposed austerity contributes to social suffering and anxiety, creat-

ing fertile ground for the surge of fascism in Greece. The fight against Golden Dawn is also a fight against racism, poverty, homophobia and authoritarian rule. The anti-fascist forces here are aware of these complications. As I write, a solidarity caravan is moving across the country in support of workers' efforts to take over their factory and put themselves back to work. An alternative economies festival is being organized. Invitations are being sent and posters distributed for a mass assembly of people to discuss how to carry their anti-fascist struggle forward. Let's hope that their momentum builds and that they gain support.

Chris Spannos is a writer, editor, publisher and videographer. He has been visiting Greece yearly since 2009.

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Quebec Student Strike Wins Big

By SCOTT MONTREAL

MONTREAL, Quebec — Psst! The secret is out: We fought the law and we won.

Quebec's five-month student strike against college and university tuition hikes has ended in victory. Coming on the heels of the Arab Spring, the European revolts against disastrous austerity policies and the Occupy movement, Quebec students in three province-wide associations struck, hung tough and refused to back down against the repressive Liberal government's plan to raise tuition 75 percent (or \$1,625) over five years — winning a major battle against neoliberalism that was all but ignored by the U.S. media.

Over the last four decades, Quebec students have collectively struck against tuition hikes and cuts to loans and grants, but this strike was by far the most ferocious, drawing battle lines between the corporate state and the general population. But students didn't risk their school year just to save money — this was a communal revolt of values and passion, built on a solid foundation of mass province-wide democratic associations and a culture of militancy.

In Quebec, most colleges and universities are public. Before the strike, Quebec graduate students' tuition averaged \$2,624, less than the average \$3,000 tuition for community college in the United States. For example, Dawson Community College in Montana costs \$3,006 a year in tuition and fees — 15 to 30 times as much as Dawson College in Montreal, which charges between \$100 and \$200 for students to attend.

Also, what Americans may find very different, is that the students did not look to the political parties for salvation — nor did they organize behind any party after having forced a provincial election. Instead, they made the parties respond to them.

Nicknamed *Printemps Erable*, or Maple Spring, the strike sparked a great deal of criticism. Although most Canadians support their universal free healthcare, many think that students should pay for education. Detractors called the students *les enfants-rois*, or child-kings (a reference to the spoiled young Louis XIV).

The students who participated in the strike paid a heavy price. Many were beaten by police; more suffered academic consequences. More than 200,000 students maintained the strike for five months, with 3,387 arrested (including the author of this piece) and hundreds injured — some seriously — by plastic bullets and batons.

There were more than 100 night-time demonstrations, including theatrical, aerobic and nearly naked protests with thousands of participants, and usually another three or four daily demonstrations or direct actions, like blocking bridges, schools and streets.

The strategy of the students was simple: organize, hold general assemblies, strike, take it to the streets and resist the corporate state. Many thousands who were not students joined in. After the government made student demonstrations illegal on May 18, they morphed overnight into noisy street protests, with people banging on pots and pans. It truly felt like the neighborhood was out in the streets breaking the law.

Since most of the demonstrations were declared illegal, they were some of the largest acts of civil disobedience in the history of North America: three involved as many as 300,000 protesters. Quebec spent about



VICTORY: Students participating in the five-month strike frequently gathered for massive street demonstrations to bring attention to the negative impact of tuition hikes.

\$200 million repressing the protests and suspending and adjusting the school schedule, which is more than the government would have recouped from any tuition increase.

ELECTION VICTORY

The students and then the citizenry, wearing their *carrés rouges* (red squares), forced the Liberal government into a stalemate. The government finally called an election, in which the Liberals suffered a major defeat. The Quebec nationalist Parti Québécois (PQ), which supported the students' demand for a moratorium on the tuition hike, won a minority government.

Immediately after the PQ took over in mid-September, it announced a tuition freeze, rescinded most of the anti-student strike Law 12 (formerly Bill 78), ended Quebec's support for shale gas fracking and pledged to shut down Quebec's only nuclear power plant. These measures are popular, but the movement must maintain pressure to ensure that the PQ follows through: during its last period in power from 1994 to 2003, it attacked the nurses union and attempted to raise tuition by 30 percent. The PQ is a neoliberal party that, like the Democrats, absorbs many union members and progressive Quebecois nationalists into its ranks and maintains a thinly disguised antipathy to Muslims and non-French-speaking immigrants.

DIVISIONS

The strike was composed almost entirely of French-speaking students, many of whom saw this as a battle for the future of "their Quebec." Race, nationalism and ethnicity loom large in Quebec's political movements and often contribute to divisions within them. Though most of Quebec's "ethnic communities" and immigrants are French-speaking and educated in French, they were not well represented in the strike. This is due at least in part to systemic racial divisions. Most strikers were liberal arts students, not those in the engineering, science and business programs favored by immigrants.

Political divisions in the student movement remain as well. The Coalition large de l'association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (CLASSE), which organized half of the strikers and mobilized most of the direct actions, wants free tuition as a goal.

They have been supportive of other progressive demands, recognizing the colonial occupation of native lands and opposing "Plan Nord," the anti-indigenous state-sponsored plan for development of north Quebec by mining and development corporations.

While the unions were financially supportive of the striking student associations, they didn't mobilize their members, which was a major disappointment. Had they done so, their broader working-class demands are something the movement might be striving for now, instead of getting distracted by competing capitalist parties.

TOO EARLY

It is too early to say what this all means. The students who struck are tired, but elated. They won all of their "realistic" demands. Quebec is one of only three provinces to see no tuition increases in the last few years. What appeared at first to be a single-issue strike against tuition hikes provided important inspiration and lessons about defeating neoliberalism.

Quebec's successful student strike shows that there is no substitute for building sustainable, democratic and progressive mass organizations like those started by Quebec students decades ago. Those students are now the parents of today's strikers, and they are impressed and gratified to see that their organizing efforts have paid off.

Students and their families across North America are being forced to pay skyrocketing tuition as governments attempt to abandon their support for education; meanwhile, private schools cherry-pick students from wealthy families. Many will have to decide whether higher education is worth the debt. Quebec's difficult lesson is clear: building and supporting large organizations that mobilize a critical mass of students, parents and teachers is the only model that can successfully make education affordable.

Scott Montreal is involved in progressive political activities and organizing, with a focus on Palestine solidarity and health care.

This article was originally published on WagingNonviolence.org.

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MON, OCT 29, 7PM • Free
READING: ZDRAVKO ZUPANCIC: *MARKS UNDER THE SKIN/STORIES FROM A CHILDREN'S HOME: DIARY OF A TEACHER OF BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN*. Hear excerpts from this collection of poetic, heartwarming and often humorous stories, based on Zupancic's personal experiences.

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EVENT: WOMEN'S/TRANS' POETRY JAM & OPEN MIKE. Hosted by Vittoria Repetto, this jam has showcased the famous, the infamous and the unknown for over a decade. Come out and deliver (up to) eight minutes of your poetry, prose, songs and spoken word for October's pre-Halloween poetry jam.

HISTORY
D STATES

Living Under Drones

COMPILED BY ELIZABETH HENDERSON

The first armed unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, were flown in Afghanistan in October 2001. Since at least June 2004, the U.S. government has also been deploying drones in Pakistan.

The United States has increased its arsenal of Predator drones from 167 in 2002 to more than 7,000 today. Last month, the Stanford International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic and New York University's Global Justice Clinic released "Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians from U.S. Drone Practices in Pakistan." Research for the report included two investigations in Pakistan; more than 130 interviews with victims, witnesses and experts; and review of thousands of pages of documentation and media reporting. Below are some excerpts that highlight the human cost of the United States' foreign policy:

Much of the public debate about drone strikes in Pakistan has focused narrowly on whether strikes are "doing their job" — i.e., whether the majority of those killed are "militants." That framing, however, fails to take account of the people on the ground who live with the daily presence of lethal drones in their skies and with the constant threat of drone strikes in their communities.

The most direct impacts of strikes, in addition to injuries and killings, include property damage, and often severe economic hardship and emotional trauma for injured victims and surviving family members.

LIFE UNDER DRONES

"Drones are always on my mind. It makes it difficult to sleep. They are like a mosquito. Even when you don't see them, you can hear them, you know they are there." — Mohammad Kausar (anonymized name), father of three.

Interviewees stated that day-to-day activities, such as buying groceries or traveling to work, were nerve-wracking. Safdar Dawar, president of the Tribal Union of Journalists, the main association of journalists in the areas affected by U.S. drones, described in simple terms how people in North Waziristan make everyday decisions about how to spend their time under the shadow of drones:

"If I am walking in the market, I have this fear that maybe the person walking next to me is going to be a target of the drone. If I'm shopping, I'm really careful and scared. If I'm standing on the road and there is a car parked next to me, I never know if that is going to be the target. Maybe they will target the car in front of me or behind me. Even in mosques, if we're praying, we're worried that maybe one person who is standing with us praying is wanted. So, wherever we are, we have this fear of drones."

PROPERTY DAMAGE

In North Waziristan, extended families live together in compounds that often contain several smaller individual structures. Many interviewees told us that often strikes not only obliterate the target house, usually made of mud, but also cause significant damage to three or four surrounding houses.

Such destruction exacts a significant cost on communities, especially in a place like the Federally Administered Tribal Area

where "underdevelopment and poverty are particularly stark," and "savings, insurance, and social safety nets" are largely unavailable.

A 45-year-old rural farmer who had to leave his village after a drone destroyed his house, told us how it affected his family:

"A drone struck my home. ... I [was at] work at that time, so there was nobody in my home and no one killed. ... Nothing else was destroyed other than my house. I went back to see the home, but there was nothing to do — I just saw my home wrecked. ... I was extremely sad, because normally a house costs around 10 lakh, or 1,000,000 rupees [US \$10,593], and I don't even have 5,000 rupees now [US \$53]. I spent my whole life in that house ... my father had lived there as well. ... [I] belong to a poor family and my home has been destroyed ... [and] I'm just hoping that I somehow recover financially."

LOST INCOME

Drone strikes that kill civilians also exact a substantial toll on livelihoods by incapacitating the primary income earners of families. Because men are typically the primary income earners in their families, strikes often deprive victims' families of "a key, and perhaps its only, source of income." Families struggle to compensate for the lost income, often forcing children or other younger relatives to forgo school and enter the workforce at a young age.

Eighteen-year-old Hisham Abrar, whose cousin was killed in a drone strike, explained that "a lot of men have been killed [who are] wage earners for the house, and now the kids and the families don't have a source of income because of that."

Others in his community do what they can to help, but "they are poor, and they usually just rely on labor services — daily wage earning. That's only sufficient for themselves, so it's hard to help others. But whenever they can, they do."

DEATH AND INJURY

The most immediate consequence of drone strikes is, of course, death and injury to those targeted or near a strike. The missiles fired from drones kill or injure in several ways, including through incineration, shrapnel, and the release of powerful blast waves capable of crushing internal organs. Those who do survive drone strikes often suffer disfiguring burns and shrapnel wounds, limb amputations, as well as vision and hearing loss.



Khairullah Jan describes the day his brother was killed in a drone attack, and how it has affected his family:

"[One day, [m]y brother was coming from college ... dropping his friend to his house, which is located behind our house a few kilometers away. ... I was coming from Mir Ali Bazaar ... going to my house. That's when I heard a drone strike and I felt something in my heart. I thought something had happened, but we didn't get to know until next day. That's when all the villagers came and brought us news that [my brother] had been [killed]. ... I was drinking tea when I found out. [My] entire family was there. They were crying. ... [T]o lose such a young one; everybody is sad and it also affects the tribe, our community, as well. My mother is

really affected. She is sad all the time, and my father is also heavily affected. At times he used to go to Peshawar or Karachi, he was outgoing, but now he sits at home."

"I have been affected. The love that I had for studies — that has finished. My determination to study — that is also gone. ... [I]f, for instance, there is a drone strike and four or five of your villagers die and you feel sad for them and you feel like throwing everything away, because you feel death is near — [death is] so close, so why do you want to study?"

To read the full report, visit livingunderdrones.org.

Hollywood and the Corporate Dystopia

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

“Corporations are people, my friend,” former Gov. Mitt Romney shouted over hecklers at a campaign event last August. They groaned and his eyebrows shot up, “Of course they are. Everything corporations earn ultimately goes to people.” They let loose a loud raucous barnyard laughter. He patted the air as if taming a wild animal, “People’s pockets — human beings my friend.”

They cackled as he went on. Hearing a rich man say money flows directly from businesses to people after Wall Street crashed the economy was just too much. But more than lived experience was behind the guffaws. An American counter-narrative exists that says, no, corporations are not human and neither are those who work for them.

In films, we repeatedly see Big Business as a malevolent entity that Borg-like destroys the individual. In 1973’s *Soylent Green*, in 1987’s *RoboCop*, in 2005’s *The Island*, in the *Alien* franchise and most recently in 2009’s *District 9* and *Avatar*; the hero is transformed into food or a monster, an alien or cyborg by corporations.



Sigourney Weaver as Ellen Ripley in *Alien: Resurrection* (1997).

American cinema repeats the old Marxist idea that we are shaped by labor. And often the films end with the lesson that only when we become something other than ourselves can we destroy the system that created us.

“You going to be a bad motherfucker,” mid-level executive Bob Morton says to RoboCop, who stomps into the chaotic streets of Detroit to bring law and order. The Detroit in that film is a Republican wet dream. It’s a city gone bankrupt, taken over by a large corporation that replaces workers with tireless machines. But the message of the film is not a simple endorsement of a corporate



Peter Weller as Officer Alex J. Murphy/RoboCop in *RoboCop* (1987).

city-state, or even just a masculine revenge fantasy.

We can locate the truth of the film by paying attention to the traumatic “real” that wounds the protagonists. And the word “real” is key. The history that’s repressed from our social narrative returns in the form of fictionalized horror or fantasy. It is the “real” not as ontological fact but as the reality that cannot be symbolized because it contradicts our ideology. In *The Pervert’s Guide to the Cinema*, cultural critic Slavoj Žižek said, “If something gets too traumatic, too violent, even too filled with enjoyment, it shatters the coordinates of our reality we have to

trauma is of workers forced to be vehicles for the production of surplus profit. Same thing in *The Island*, *District 9* and *Avatar* — no one completely owns themselves.

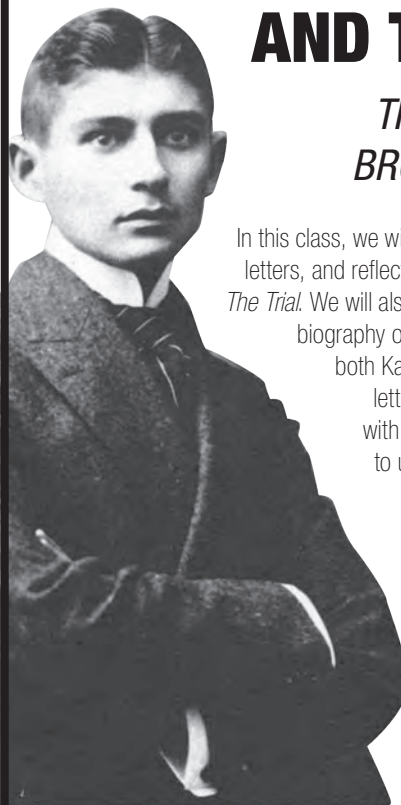
But what if there is a second step? What if the cyborg, the alien chest-buster or the blue Navi puppet body become where workers overcome their alienation? The transformation leaves them stranded between two bodies, two lives. In this worker-turns-into-Frankenstein genre, the protagonist tries to return to their previous lives. But they can’t. The change is irreversible.

What is left is that their alienation gives them the tools to destroy the system that created them. And along the way, some corporate character that represents the whole system gets killed. RoboCop shoots a CEO out of the window before reclaiming his former name “Murphy.” Ripley in *Alien: Resurrection* is now a clone with Xenomorph DNA who destroys the Queen before she unleashes her hordes on earth. In *Avatar*, Jake Sully is transformed into a blue Navi and in his new body can defeat the Resources Development Association that is ripping apart Pandora. Again and again, the films show workers who challenge the corporation that traumatized them only after being alienated into a new self.

So when Gov. Romney said, “Corporations are people, my friend,” the crowd laughed because they knew a business is not a person. But if Hollywood is at all effective in making the trauma of capitalism into fantastic imagery, the lesson is that human beings can’t survive in the corporate world without being transformed. Sometimes, as Žižek pointed out when he wrote that a turn to fascism is a failed revolution, they become monsters. But sometimes, like in the Occupy movement, they become heroes.

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REVIEW



Gregg Shotwell, author of *Autoworkers Under the Gun*.

Break Room Trash Talk Be- comes Book

*Autoworkers Under the Gun:
A Shop-Floor View of the End
of the American Dream*
BY GREGG SHOTWELL
HAYMARKET BOOKS, 2012

In *Autoworkers Under the Gun* retired machine operator and United Auto Workers (UAW) dissident Gregg Shotwell chronicles the events leading up to the auto bailouts of 2009, starting with the spinoff of Delphi Automotive Systems from General Motors in 1999. Shotwell, an active union member who put in 30 years with GM, spoke out against the plan to move the company's entire parts division to Delphi at the UAW bargaining convention that same year, citing the wage cuts that workers at Delphi would face: "How can we hope to organize parts plants if all we have to offer is prevailing wage? They've got prevailing wage and it stinks. We want parity with the Big Three for all parts plants. ... Brothers and

sisters, if you work for one of the Big Three today, beware."

In 2005, Shotwell's warning to workers became a reality when Delphi hired "turnaround expert" Steve Miller as CEO. Miller's one objective was to drive Delphi into bankruptcy as fast as possible and then gut unionized workers' wages and pensions. Shotwell said of Miller: "A white collar and a tie don't make a thug any less despicable."

The book's selections are culled from Shotwell's *Live Bait & Ammo* newsletter, which began circulating in factory shop floors and break rooms in 1998. While he documents the capitalist creative destruction and restructuring of the American auto industry and laments the demise of U.S.-made unionized car-making, he also

In 1992 GM employed 265,000 UAW members who produced 4.4 million vehicles. By 2007 only 75,000 UAW members remained, but they still produced roughly the same number of vehicles...

offers insight into the root of the problem.

In one essay he unleashes a barrage of numbers, and one statistic in particular stuck with me: In 1992 GM employed 265,000 UAW members who produced 4.4 million vehicles. By 2007 only 75,000 UAW members remained, but they still produced roughly the same

number of vehicles, demonstrating an incredible increase in efficiency.

However, these increases in production have come at a high cost for workers, and Shotwell excoriates UAW officials for negotiating the industry-wide two-tier wage system (lower wages and benefits for new hires) that divides younger and older workers. He also takes on UAW leaders for their role in the union's decline. He mocks the Solidarity House, the UAW's Detroit headquarters, as the "Sold-out-Dignity House," and his critiques often veer into ad hominem personal attacks. Are some of his attacks unfair? Yes, and Shotwell is also too cynical about dissidents taking control of local unions and is clear-eyed about the UAW's decline and failure to organize foreign automakers producing state-

side. In the 2008 essay, "In Defense of American Workers," Shotwell sums up the current crisis

facing autoworkers, as well as the labor movement as a whole:

"Conflict is fundamental to change, but when we are mostly concerned about our individual economic security rather than the security of our class as a whole, we are more likely to settle for the safe bet and the status quo."

—BENNETT BAUMER

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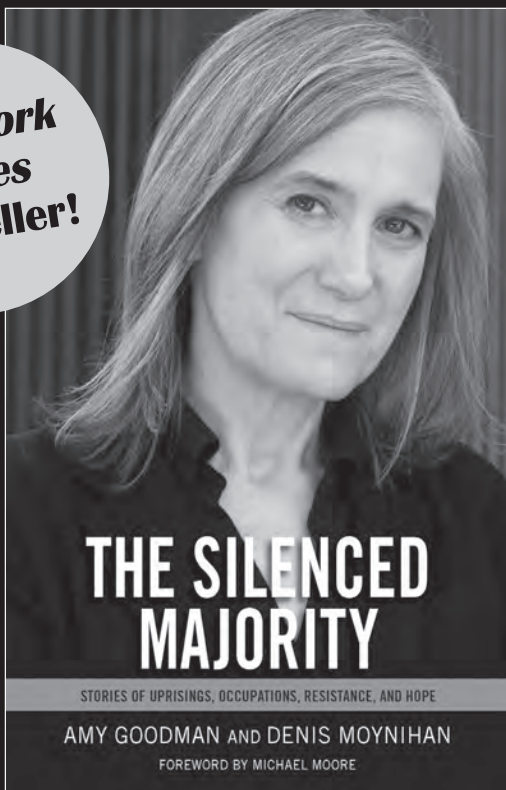
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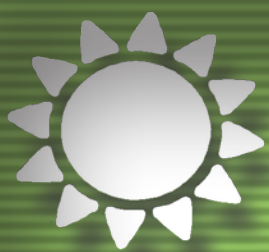


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